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ABSTRACT

A study explored the factors that influenced the career choice of minority public relations professionals, the level of satisfaction with their career choice, and whether they perceive that they have been victims of labor market discrimination. Subjects, 140 public relations practitioners listed in the Directory of Minority Public Relations Professionals, responded to a questionnaire, for a response rate of 59%. The subjects were 109 Black Americans, 21 Hispanic Americans, 7 Asian Americans, and 2 Native Americans. Results indicated that: (1) the opportunity to work with other people was an important variable in the decision to pursue a career in public relations; (2) high school and college counselors were the least influential in respondents' career choice; (3) respondents were reasonably satisfied with their employment situation; (4) labor market discrimination was a concern among some respondents; (5) among black respondents, older respondents were not more apt to have experienced discrimination; and (6) minority males perceived having been victims of discrimination to a greater extent than did minority females. (Five tables of data and 38 footnotes are included.) (RS)

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MINORITY PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS:
CAREER INFLUENCES, JOB SATISFACTION, AND DISCRIMINATION*

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More than 20 years after the Kerner Commission Report recommended that the media hire more minorities, racial and ethnic minorities remain underrepresented in the media and in related fields such as public relations. Of the 151,000 people classified as public relations specialists in 1988, 5.1% were black and 2.4% were Hispanic. A much smaller proportion of the 482,000 people classified as marketing, advertising and public relations managers were black. In that group, only 3.6% were black Americans and 2.6% were Hispanic.¹

The low percentage of minorities in these managerial positions is not surprising in light of the total numbers of minority managers. Researchers at the Rutgers University Graduate School of Management and the Program to Increase Minorities in Business surveyed 400 Fortune 1000 companies in 1986, and found that less than 9% of all managers were minorities. Of 1,362 top managers surveyed in 1985 by the executive recruiting firm of Korn/Ferry International, less than 1% were minorities.²

Currently, one in every five Americans is non-white or Hispanic³ and by the year 2000 one in every four Americans is expected to be non-white or Hispanic. These statistics have prompted some U.S. corporations to recognize the importance of valuing cultural diversity in the workplace, particularly because of its implications in the marketplace. As one executive put it, "managing diversity is far from being a passing fad...[it is] a business issue affecting the bottom line."⁴ At Procter and Gamble, says CEO John Smale, diversity "is not an option; it is a necessity."⁵ The importance of diversity was also stressed by Andrew McGowan, vice president, Planned Communication Services. "Public relations teams in corporations and firms must be diversified in order to communicate with diversified audiences."⁶

Although public relations practitioners in organizations often are central to the task of communicating management's commitment to diversity, those who are conveying corporate messages of cultural diversity do not themselves represent a diverse population. In fact,

minority public relations practitioners are less likely to be found in corporate America than they are in non-corporate settings. For example, Kern-Foxworth, who surveyed minority public relations practitioners, concluded that the typical minority practitioner is a 38-year-old black female working as a middle level manager in a government agency or public utility.⁷

The literature suggests several factors that may be significant in explaining the dearth of minorities in public relations. These include the lack of role models, lack of knowledge about the field, and discrimination. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to determine the extent to which these factors may have deterred some minorities from choosing public relations as a career or the extent to which they may have led others to abandon it. Some insight can be gained, however, by exploring the factors that influenced those minorities currently practicing public relations. The purpose of the present study, therefore, is to explore the factors that influenced the career choice of minority public relations professionals; the level of satisfaction with their career choice; and whether they perceive that they have been victims of labor market discrimination.

Literature Review

The history of blacks in public relations has been chronicled by Hill and Farrell⁸ and Kern-Foxworth.⁹ Among those cited are Joseph V. Baker, the first black to become president of a chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and, perhaps, the first black to be accredited by PRSA; the Rev. Barbara Harris, who, after 30 years in public relations, was ordained an Episcopal minister and later consecrated as a bishop; D. Parke Gibson, one of the best known black practitioners because of his active role in PRSA; and Vincent Tubbs, who has been called the "Jackie Robinson" of entertainment publicists.

Kern-Foxworth surveyed 348 minority public relations practitioners to determine their

status and roles. Among her 196 respondents, she found that the way in which minorities perceived their job levels was not in keeping with the roles that correlated with those levels. The majority "perceived themselves in middle-level management, which would equate to the problem-solver role...42% of their time was spent in the communication technician role."¹⁰ She also found that the average salary of minority public relations practitioners was less than the expected salary of their white counterparts.

More than half of Kern-Foxworth's respondents had degrees in public relations, journalism or communications. Journalism graduates were "more likely to be responsible for writing, editing and producing material to present management's position" and "less likely to guide management through step by step planning and programming processes."¹¹

Although the enrollment of minorities in undergraduate journalism and mass communication programs increased from 13.1% in 1988 to 15.6% in 1989,¹² it is not clear how many of these students are preparing for careers in public relations. An analysis of data from a sample of students who took the ACT college entrance exam indicated that blacks are "especially likely to select telecommunication for a major and career."¹³ The proportion of public relations majors, the second largest area of specialization in journalism and mass communication programs, declined from 15.6% in 1988 to 13.2% in 1989. Public relations practitioners who want to be managers will be expected to have earned a master's degree. Enrollment of minorities in master's programs in journalism and mass communication, however, also declined from 14.2% in 1988 to 12.1% in 1989.¹⁴

Factors Influencing Career Choice

Many factors influence a person's occupational choice. Early studies of minority aspirations and career choices suggested a preference for fields in which working with people is a major component such as education and the social sciences.¹⁵ Freeman, who surveyed

black and non-black college students found that stability of income or employment was important to 82% of the black students but to only 21% of the non-black students. Level of income was important to 61% of the black students and 16% of the non-black students.¹⁶

Burgoon *et al.*, however, found that "job attributes like 'being in a position to help people' and 'providing a challenge' were the most important for young minority students."¹⁷ The researchers also found little difference between minorities and non-minorities in their top choices for a major and a career. Business/commerce and health professions were the most popular first choices followed by computer/information sciences and engineering. Generally, the data showed that "the total pool of minority students committed specifically to journalism by the time they reach college is quite small."¹⁸ The researchers concluded that "large numbers of bright, motivated minorities exist who desire a challenging profession in which they can contribute to the general well-being of others. They are finding other paths in life largely because they know little about journalism."¹⁹ Presumably, these young people know even less about public relations, given that most people do not understand public relations.

Guidance counselors are not the most important influence on students as they choose a college major or a career, but the literature consistently mentions their role in the process. Atkinson's review of the literature on counseling black students suggests that pairing white counselors with black students is often ineffective. The white counselor's lack of knowledge about black experiences and the counselor's insensitivity to black values have frequently been cited as impediments to effective career counseling.²⁰ In addition, "There is an absence at the high school level of counseling public relations as a viable career option," observed Ruby Miller, APR, the first black woman to be elected to the National Board of Directors of PRSA.²¹

In an attempt to find out why blacks are not entering the field of journalism, Tipton,

Lowenstein and Carson surveyed 22 predominantly white colleges and universities which had a substantial number of black journalism students. Of the 12 schools that responded, three-fourths did not have a part-time or full-time person on staff assigned to minority recruitment and only half maintained regular contact with high schools or community colleges for the purpose of recruiting minority students. When respondents were asked what could be done to attract more minorities, the most frequent response was to provide higher salaries to graduates. The second most frequent answer was to encourage successful role models to visit high schools and colleges.²²

An individual is more likely to express a preference for a course of study, an occupation, or a field of work, if that person has been consistently and positively reinforced by a valued person who models and/or advocates engaging in the course, occupation, or field or work.²³ The lack of visible role models is a factor often mentioned when discussing the limited number of black communications students and professionals. For example, a survey of 149 members of the National Association of Black Journalists found that black print journalists were generally satisfied with their education, but thought that it could have been improved by the presence of more black instructors and role models.²⁴ Minority public relations practitioners have also observed that "there are probably only three or four minority college professors now teaching public relations."²⁵ Practitioner Ruby Miller also attributes the disproportionate number of blacks in public relations to "lack of knowledge about the profession by black students, the absence of visible black role models working in the field, and the continued presence of institutional racism in our society."²⁶

Racial Barriers

Although evidence of racial barriers in public relations is primarily anecdotal, the difficulties faced by minorities in the field of journalism have been well documented.

Evidence suggests that minorities working in communication fields "face a considerable measure of indifference, insensitivity or discrimination, both subtle and blatant."²⁷ "Even after all these years, the primary problem minorities face is getting in the door," observed Denise Johnson of the American Society of Newspaper Editors.²⁸ Once in the door, minorities are still confronted by prejudice and discrimination.

The Washington/Baltimore Newspaper Guild complained that the *Washington Post* paid blacks and women less than it paid white males. In fact, a survey published by the *Post* in 1986 showed that its black newsroom employees were more frustrated than white employees. As a result, the *Post* reorganized its newsroom personnel operation in an attempt to "improve the recruiting, hiring, training, performance evaluation and career development of professionals on the staff."²⁹

White women are progressing in broadcasting from year to year, but minorities are "losing ground," according to an annual survey by Stone of minorities and women in broadcast news.³⁰ From 1976 to 1986, white women made great gains but the proportion of minority women showed little change. In addition, Stone found underrepresentation of minorities to be far greater in management than in the rank and file jobs of broadcast news.³¹ About 3% of television and 6% of radio news directors out of 331 broadcasters surveyed in 1987 were minorities. At commercial television stations, the majority of minority news directors were Hispanic men. Minority men were "overrepresented in one of the lowest paying jobs in TV news...camera operators."³² It is not likely to move from such a position to management. Knowing that the door to management is virtually closed may deter minorities from pursuing communications and may, in fact, drive them away from communication professions generally.

Black journalists at three newspapers surveyed by Regan and Shin said they were

satisfied with their jobs but were disturbed by their lack of job mobility. They believed that white journalists had an easier time getting ahead. The lack of advancement was cited as a primary reason why minority journalists chose to leave the profession.³³ Similarly, a study published by the Institute for Journalism Education in 1985 revealed that 41% of the more than 200 minority journalists surveyed thought they would eventually leave the field of journalism primarily because of dissatisfaction with their job mobility.

A survey conducted by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) was designed to identify the special problems of minority communication professionals (IABC, 1987). Although only 85 of the 400 people surveyed responded, almost 60% of those who did indicated that they had experienced barriers to upward mobility in their professions. These barriers included racism, sexism, ageism and internal politics. Fifty-three of the respondents identified public relations as the type of work they performed.³⁴

In 1988 the Atlanta Interassociation Council for Public Relations (IAC) commissioned a survey of 800 Atlanta-area public relations professionals. The 131 respondents included 93 whites, 37 blacks and one Hispanic. There was strong disagreement between black and white respondents on whether race affects hiring and promotions. Some 81% of the black respondents and only 27% of the white respondents said that minorities have greater job-search difficulties. Fifty percent of the black respondents and 3% of the white respondents strongly agreed that minorities have less opportunity to be promoted once they have been hired. Neither black nor white respondents believed that hiring minority public relations professionals was a high priority for white employers.³⁵

A second IAC survey in 1989 of 50 key corporate and agency public relations executives was designed to evaluate experiences in recruiting, hiring and promoting minorities. Five of the 18 executives who responded were willing to discuss the issue further.

Some of the points that surfaced in these discussions included "we'd hire them if we could find them;" experience, rather than race, is key when hiring mid to senior level executives; and that public relations internships and mentoring programs are needed.³⁶

Gill studied the role of racial discrimination in determining occupational structure and found that much of the underrepresentation of blacks in managerial, sales, clerical, and craft occupations can be attributed to discrimination. These results contrast with those that suggest that individual choice yields the racial differences that are found in the present occupational structure.³⁷

Braddock, Crian, McPartland and Dawkins state that the often hotly debated question of whether blacks continue to be victims of labor market discrimination is important for several reasons. Major differences still exist in black-white unemployment and average earnings despite closing of the racial gap in educational attainment over the last 25 years. Affirmative action practices aimed at providing equal employment opportunities are now being questioned, and sometimes revoked. In addition, black perceptions and white perceptions of equal employment opportunities often differ sharply.³⁸

METHODOLOGY

Questionnaires were mailed in September 1990 to public relations practitioners listed in the Directory of Minority Public Relations Professionals published by the Public Relations Society of America. This national directory is an effort by the PRSA National Minority Affairs Committee to identify and increase the visibility of minorities working in the public relations field. The committee defined minority as American Indian, Asian, black, Hispanic and other unspecified groups that have low representation in the public relations field. The 267 names in this directory do not represent the universe of minorities working in the field but only

those aware of the list and who gave permission to have their names listed. Those listed were employed by universities, federal and local government agencies, firms, associations and corporations, and some were self-employed.

A self-addressed, stamped return envelope was enclosed with the questionnaire. These envelopes were coded to keep track of those who returned their questionnaires. After checking the respondent's name against the master list, the return envelopes were discarded. A follow-up letter and questionnaire were mailed three weeks after the initial mailing. The two mailings yielded a response rate of 59%, with 140 usable questionnaires.

The four-page instrument included closed- and open-ended items. Items measured influences on their choice of career, job satisfaction and perceptions of job discrimination. Demographic information requested included education, income, race, gender, marital status and age. The research instrument included an open-ended item that asked respondents to state why they think so few minorities enter the field of public relations. Respondents who answered yes to the question "Have you considered leaving the field of public relations" were asked to explain why they have considered leaving the field.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was used to analyze the data.

RESULTS

Nearly two-thirds (63.6%) of the respondents were women. Exactly one-half of the respondents were married. There were 109 black Americans, 21 Hispanic Americans, 7 Asian Americans and 2 Native Americans. They ranged in age from 24 to 87, with a mean of 37 years of age and a mode of 39 years of age. More than half (56%) had taken course work beyond a bachelor's degree. Approximately 26% had master's degrees and 4% had doctoral degrees. On both the undergraduate and graduate levels, the greatest proportion of survey

participants had earned a degree in journalism or communication (24% of the undergraduate degrees and 11% of the graduate degrees). No other majors were mentioned more frequently. Other majors mentioned were sociology, English, education and psychology.

Respondents were asked to indicate the number of years they had held their present position. Most (73%) said they had held their current position for 1-5 years; 13.6%, 6-10 years; 7%, 12-20 years; and 4%, 21-31 years. The average time working in the field was greatest for those who said they were self-employed.

Nearly a third (30%) of the respondents worked in a corporation; 23% worked in a firm or agency; 14% worked for the government; 10% of the respondents were self-employed; 8% work for an association; and 6% worked for a college or university. The remainder listed "other" as their place of employment.

Although 70% of the respondents had titles such as director, manager, supervisor, president, vice president, coordinator, and account executive, only 64% of the total said they supervised a staff. The number of people supervised ranged from 1 to 35, however, 94% of the respondents supervised 10 or fewer employees. A slightly smaller proportion (65%) of the male respondents supervised a staff than the proportion of women (69%).

Respondents were asked to check the range in which their annual salaries fell. The ranges were in increments of \$10,000. Only one respondent earned less than \$20,000 and two earned more than \$100,000. The remaining distribution was: 14%, \$20,000-29,000; 20%, \$30,000-39,000; 20%, \$40,000-49,000; 21%, \$50,000-\$59,000; 10%, \$60,000-69,000; 5%, \$90,000-99,000. The mode of the male respondents' annual salary range was \$50,000-59,000 and the mode of the female respondents' annual salary range was \$30,000-39,000.

Influences on Career Choice

Almost as many respondents said they knew minority public relations practitioners

prior to entering the field (46%) as those who said they did not (49%). When asked to speculate why so few minorities enter the public relations field, many respondents presented more than one reason. The most frequent response was that minorities are not aware of the career opportunities offered by the field. In order of frequency, the other explanations offered were racism, lack of role models, lack of encouragement, limited growth offered by the field, minorities' lack of the necessary skills, negative reputation of the field, and the belief that other fields are more accessible. Still, an overwhelming 93% of the respondents answered that they would encourage a minority student to pursue a career in public relations.

Respondents were asked to indicate on a scale ranging from 0 (no influence) to 10 (great influence) the extent to which each of nine factors influenced their career decision. The factors and the mean responses given by men and women are reported in Table 1. Least influential on respondents' career choices were counselors. The most influential factors were an early interest in communication and the opportunity to work with people. A *t*-test comparison of the means showed no significant differences between men and women on these factors.

Table 1 Here

Satisfaction Levels

Respondents were asked to indicate on a scale ranging from 0 (not at all satisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied) their levels of satisfaction with their present job functions, salary, opportunity for advancement, networking opportunities, the public relations field, interaction with other minority practitioners, and minority participation in public relations. Their responses are reported in Table 2. Respondents were most satisfied with networking

opportunities and their present job function. They were least satisfied with their interaction with other minority practitioners and with minority participation in public relations. A *t*-test comparison of the means for male and female respondents showed no significant differences on these measures.

Table 2 Here

Despite being reasonably satisfied with the public relations field, nearly half (48%) the respondents said they had considered leaving the field. Those who had considered leaving public relations had spent an average of 4.6 years in the field compared to an average of 5.4 years for those who had not considered leaving. A *t*-test comparison showed no significant difference between these means.

When those who said they had considered leaving the field were asked to explain their reasons, 43% said "to explore other career options." This response was followed in frequency by the "limited opportunities available in the public relations field" (33%) "low salaries" (12%), "to escape racism" (8%) and because they were "bored with the field of public relations" (8%).

Respondents who had considered leaving the field were compared with those who had not considered leaving on the satisfaction variables. As might be expected, those who had considered leaving the field were generally less satisfied than those who had not considered leaving. The results are reported in Table 3.

Table 3 Here

The desire to leave the field of public relations was also examined by race and gender of the respondents. Among the black respondents, 22 of 39 men and 29 of 70 women said

they had considered leaving the field. Four of 9 Hispanic males and 5 of 12 Hispanic females said they had considered leaving the field. One of 3 Asian males and all four Asian females said they had considered leaving the field. Both of the Native American respondents said they had considered leaving the field.

Responses were analyzed to determine if place of employment contributed to differences in satisfaction levels. Respondents who worked in government, associations or higher education were collapsed into a single category for this comparison. First, the satisfaction means of respondents who worked in corporations were compared with those who worked in public relations firms. Those working in corporate settings were less satisfied with opportunities for advancement (mean=5.2) than were those working in firms (mean=7.0) and the difference in means was significant ($t=-2.28$, $p<.05$). Those working in corporate settings were also less satisfied with networking opportunities (mean=7.3) than were those working in firms (mean=8.4). These differences were also significant ($t=-2.20$, $p<.05$).

Additional comparisons were made between those who worked for corporations and those who worked in settings other than a public relations firm. Those who worked for firms were also more satisfied with networking opportunities (mean=8.4) than were those who worked in governments, associations, and higher education (mean=7.2). The difference in means was significant ($t=2.45$, $p<.05$). Those working in firms were also more satisfied (mean=8.4) than those who were self-employed (mean=6.9). The difference in means was significant ($t=2.69$, $p<.01$). No other significant differences between organization type were found on the satisfaction variables.

Labor Market Discrimination

Several questions were designed to determine whether respondents perceived having been discriminated against because of their race. They were asked if they thought they had

ever been denied a promotion, a salary increase, access to a client, access to a project, or a public relations position because their race. The percentage of affirmative responses in each category were as follows: "denied a promotion," 51%; "denied a salary increase," 36%; "denied access to a client," 41%; "denied access to a project," 44%; "denied access to a public relations position," 43%. A few respondents (6%) said they did not know if they had been denied access to a public relations position because of their race.

Crosstabulations were run to determine whether age was related to whether or not respondents perceived that they had been victims of labor market discrimination mentioned above. Respondents were divided into four age categories: less than 30 years of age, 30 to 44 years of age, 45 to 60 years of age, and those over 60 years of age. Only 1 of the 7 Asian respondents perceived having been discriminated against because of race. That person was over 60. Among the 21 Hispanic respondents, none of the 3 respondents under 30 perceived having been discriminated against. One 45-60-year-old Hispanic respondent perceived having been denied access to a client and a project. Among the 14 30-44-year-old Hispanic respondents, 9 said they had been denied a salary increase; 6 said they had been denied access to a PR project, 5 said they had been denied a PR position, 5 said they had been denied a promotion; and 4 said they had been denied access to a client. The greatest proportion of black respondents were 30-44 years old. The proportion of responses in each category from this age group were: 65%, denied a promotion; 52%, denied a PR position; 49% denied access to a project; 48% denied access to a client; and 42% denied a salary increase. About 50 percent of black respondents in all other age categories said that they had been denied a salary increase, access to a client, access to a project or a public relations position because of race. About two-thirds of those between 30 and 60 years of age said they had been denied a promotion because of race.

The percentage of respondents who perceived having been discriminated against, based on organization type in which respondents were employed, is presented in Table 4.

Insert Table 4 Here

There seemed to be a moderate relationship between considering leaving the field and perceived discrimination. Of the 67 respondents who had considered leaving the public relations field, 43% thought they had been denied a promotion because of their race; 57% thought they had been denied a salary increase; 58% thought they had been denied access to a client; 21% thought they had been denied a project; 43% thought that they had been denied a public relations position.

When responses of men and women were compared on the discrimination variables, in all but one instance -- denied a client -- the proportion of men who perceived discrimination was higher than the proportion of women. The percentages are reported in Table 5.

Table 5 Here

Discussion

Students majoring in public relations often cite "liking people" as their reason for pursuing a career in public relations. Clearly public relations is a people-oriented field, which might explain why the minority public relations practitioners in this study cited the "opportunity to work with other people" as an important variable that influenced their decision to pursue a career in public relations.

It is interesting to note that although "an early interest in communications" was the

most important factor influencing respondents' career choice, high school and college counselors were the least influential. If high school and college counselors did not encourage or nurture the respondents, then it is not clear from this study who or what kept this "early interest" alive. Counselors are either unaware of the public relations field or are not steering minority students in that direction. In either case, career counselors must educate themselves and be encouraged to better educate their students about opportunities in public relations.

Perhaps the Public Relations Society of America, the International Association of Business Communicators, and other professional organizations should consider hosting seminars designed to enlighten career counselors to the opportunities available in the public relations field. These seminars should include tips on how to identify minority students who possess the skills necessary to excel in the field, who to contact once these students are identified, and how to design academic programs so that these students are prepared to compete for and sustain employment in this field.

The respondents appear to be reasonably satisfied with their employment situations, particularly with their present job functions, their opportunities for advancement, and with the field of public relations. It seems that these professionals are functioning well, and succeeding. This might explain why 93% of the respondents would encourage a minority student to enter the field.

The relatively high satisfaction levels also suggest that these minority public relations professionals have developed coping mechanisms which allow them to endure what sometimes might be a hostile environment. These survey respondents belong to a professional organization or are in some other way linked to minority public relations professionals. It would be interesting to know the effect of these professional relationships upon the respondents' job satisfaction, and if professionals who are not members of such

groups are equally satisfied with their employment situations.

The particular satisfaction variables which yielded the highest means, present job functions, opportunities for advancement, and the field of public relations, indicate that minority public relations professionals enjoy what they are doing, appreciate the field in which they work, and plan to advance within this field. This is very positive news for those interested in increasing the presence of minorities within the field. The greater the number of minority public relations professionals, the more exposure minority youth will have to the field. As more minority youth notice their parents, relatives, church members and neighborhood role models working in public relations, they will begin to understand the field and, perhaps, perceive it as an attainable career option.

This study presents evidence that labor market discrimination is a concern among some minority professionals. When respondents were asked why they thought there were so few minorities working in public relations, the most frequently cited answer was "racism." The only response cited more often was that minorities are not aware of the employment opportunities in the public relations field. In light of these findings, though, it is difficult to determine the impact of racial and ethnic discrimination in the public relations field.

If racism is so prevalent within the field, though, it is unclear why more respondents did not claim to have personally experienced it. And if these professionals are not experiencing racism to an overwhelming degree, where are the professionals who have been victims of labor market discrimination? One explanation is that the minority public relations professionals who have been discriminated against have not joined professional organizations or otherwise sought the support of fellow minority professionals and were, therefore, not included in the population surveyed.

Another possible explanation is that the effect of racism upon career choice has been

exaggerated. Perhaps racism is being used as an excuse for other job limitations or difficulties. It is also possible that even though respondents perceived that racism has a great presence within the public relations field, somehow they have escaped it. Black respondents believe that they have been victims of discrimination to a greater extent than other minorities. This finding parallels the literature which suggests that Hispanic and Asian professionals are reaching management ranks in greater numbers than black professionals (Stone 1987), but the number of non-black minorities in this survey are too few to generalize.

Generalizations also cannot be made regarding the impact of place of employment, but the responses raise some interesting questions. The majority of the 14 respondents who were self-employed indicated that they thought they had been denied a project (79%), promotion (64%), and public relations position (79%) because of their race. It would be interesting to know if these discriminatory factors influenced the respondents' decision to establish their own businesses. It is also possible, however, that the respondents have been victims of labor market discrimination while self-employed.

The majority of the 8 respondents employed by colleges or universities perceived that they had been denied a promotion (63%) and a public relations position (75%) because of their race. This raises the question of whether having been denied a public relations position because of race influenced the respondents' decision to leave the professional world and enter the academic world, or if these respondents have experienced this type of discrimination while working at a college or university.

The 11 respondents employed by associations perceived the least amount of labor market discrimination. In only one instance – if they had been denied a public relations position because of race – did the "yes" answers outnumber the "no" answers. It is possible that discrimination would be experienced to a lesser degree in an association because of the

manner in which most associations operate. Most managers and directors report directly to a member of the associations' board of directors. More often than not, these two persons do not work in the same office, and usually not even in the same state. Perhaps this distance reduces the chances for discrimination.

One might expect that older respondents would have been more apt to experience discrimination than younger ones, but this was not the case among black respondents. It would seem that older respondents would have been more apt to have experienced this type of discrimination than the younger respondents, who are supposedly working in a "friendlier" era, but this was not the case. This finding belies the "progress" of the Civil Rights Movement and its adjacent legislation. If the discriminatory practices experienced by minority professionals over 60 years of age are almost identical to the experiences of those in their 20s and 30s, it seems that little progress has been made.

This study also found that minority males perceived having been victims of discrimination to a greater extent than did minority females. This finding is consistent with other studies that have shown the lack of progress of minority males in other communication fields.

Although few studies have addressed the participation of minorities within the field of public relations, there is considerable interest in this subject. The change in America's demographic composition, coupled with the interest exhibited by the minority public relations practitioners who participated in this study, dictate that additional research be conducted. The literature needs an even clearer picture of the public relations field and how it relates to its minority professionals. Additional research is needed to determine how the experiences and perceptions of minority public relations practitioners compare to those of white practitioners. For example, it would be interesting to know if answers such as their

reasons for considering leaving the field are unique to minorities or whether white professionals consider leaving their jobs for similar reasons. For example, it is possible that most public relations professionals are drawn to the field because of the opportunity to work with people, thus indicating that this career influence is not unique to minorities, but is, instead, typical of public relations practitioners.

Secondly, additional research is needed to determine whether or not labor market discrimination and racism are experienced by minorities working in public relations to any greater extent than it is experienced by minorities in other fields. Thirdly, it would be interesting to compare the experiences of minority women working in public relations to the experiences of white women. Although not specifically asked, a few of the female participants of this study noted that they had been discriminated against because of gender, and not necessarily because of their race.

One limitation of this study is the fact that the PRSA directory of minority practitioners did not include all minority public relations professionals. Additional research might help to determine if these findings can be applied to a larger and/or different audience.

Table 1
Factors Influencing Career Decision

	Both (N=140)	Men (N=51)	Women (N=89)
Early Interest in Communication	6.8	6.7	6.9
Opportunity to Work with People	6.6	6.0	6.9
Professional Growth Opportunity	5.7	5.6	5.8
Worked in Another Communication Field	5.2	5.7	5.0
Prestige of the PR Profession	3.9	3.9	4.0
Salary Potential	3.8	4.0	3.6
Friend or Relative Working in Field	2.3	2.9	2.0
College Counselor	1.0	.9	1.1
High School Counselor	.41	.31	.46

Table 2
Mean Levels of Satisfaction
By Gender

	All (N=140)	Men (N=51)	Women (N=89)
Your Networking Opportunities	7.4	7.1	7.6
Your Present Job Function	7.1	7.3	7.0
The Public Relations Field	6.8	6.7	6.8
Your Salary	5.9	6.0	5.8
Your Opportunity for Advancement	5.8	5.4	6.0
Interaction with Other Minority Practitioners	5.3	4.9	5.5
Minority Participation in Public Relations	3.5	3.7	3.4

Table 3
Mean Levels of Satisfaction
By Considered Leaving the Field

	Had Not Considered Leaving (N=70)	Considered Leaving (N=67)	T value
Your Present Job Function	7.6	6.7	2.11*
Your Salary	6.1	5.7	1.06
Your Opportunity for Advancement	6.7	4.9	3.24**
Your Networking Opportunities	8.1	6.8	3.30***
The Public Relations Field	7.6	6.0	4.18***
Interaction with Other Minority Practitioners	5.9	4.8	1.99*
Minority Participation in Public Relations	3.9	3.2	1.36

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 4
Proportion of Those Perceiving Discrimination
Based on Organization Type

Organization Type	Denied Promotion	Denied Salary Increase	Denied Client	Denied Project	Denied PR Position
Corporation (N=42)	55%	36%	31%	38%	36%
PR Firm (N=32)	25%	53%	46%	50%	41%
Government (N=19)	53%	37%	32%	42%	32%
Association (N=11)	36%	5%	36%	27%	45%
College/University (N=8)	63%	50%	25%	38%	75%

Table 5
Proportion of Those Perceiving Discrimination
Based on Gender

	Denied Promotion	Denied Salary Increase	Denied Client	Denied Project	Denied PR Position
Men (N=51)	59%	39%	39%	47%	47%
Women (N=89)	47%	35%	42%	43%	40%

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